

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 PM-03 SP-02 L-01 NSC-05  
NSCE-00 INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 EB-04 IO-06 ACDA-10  
OMB-01 TRSE-00 /059 W  
-----171555Z 114334 /41

R 171312Z JUN 77  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4330  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 2904

LIMDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR LE US  
SUBJ: LEBANON THE YEAR AFTER

1. SUMMARY: A YEAR AFTER ASSASSINATION OF FRANK MELOY, LEBANON HAS MADE SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS TOWARDS OUTWARD NORMALCY BUT REMAINS ON DEAD CENTER IN TERMS BASIC ISSUES. LEBANESE GOVERNMENT DRAGGING ITS FEET BECAUSE OF POLITICAL PROBLEMS AND SUFFERING FROM DISORGANIZATION AND LACK OF DYNAMIC LEADERSHIP. AMBASSADOR RECOMMENDS WE CONTINUE TO ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE. END SUMMARY.

2. TODAY, JUNE 16, IS THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE MURDER OF MY PREDECESSOR FRANK MELOY, ALONG WITH BOB WARING AND ZOHAIR MOGRABI. WE HAVE LOWERED FLAG TO HALF-MAST IN MEMORY OF THAT  
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TRAGIC OCCASION, WHICH OTHERWISE HAS PASSED UNNOTICED.

3. SITUATION TODAY IS AS DIFFERENT AS NIGHT AND DAY FROM THAT WHICH PREVAILED YEAR AGO. WE CAN, FOR INSTANCE, TRAVEL FREELY FROM ONE SIDE OF CITY TO OTHER, AND IDEA THAT VISIT TO CHRISTIAN LEADERS OR PRESIDENT SARKIS IS HAZARDOUS EXPEDITION HAS LONG SINCE FADED. ON OTHER HAND, I AM TRAVELING WITH TWICE AS MANY

GUARDS AS MELOY HAD, WHICH IS INDICATIVE OF FACT THAT NOTHING HAS BEEN SETTLED.

4. AS I LOOK OUT ON THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE BOYS OF AIN MREISSEH SWIMMING, IMPRESSION IS ONE OF NORMALCY. INDEED, VISITORS TO BEIRUT ARE IMPRESSED WITH JUST HOW LIVELY THINGS ARE. WATER AND ELECTRICITY SERVICES ARE ALMOST BACK TO NORMAL. THE POLICE ARE OUT ON STREETS IN EVER INCREASING NUMBERS, AND LAST YEAR'S EVILDOERS HAVE IN MANY INSTANCES BEEN REDUCED BACK TO NORMAL SIZE. THE MANAGER OF AMERICAN UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL, FOR INSTANCE, TOLD ME YESTERDAY OF THE CHANGE IN HIS OWN ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE RAS BEIRUT THUG WHO COULD ORDER ANYTHING A YEAR AGO AND HAS TO COME CRAWLING FOR FAVORS TODAY. HE WHO NEEDS THE DOG KISSES HIS PAW.

5. THE NIGHT CLUBS AND RESTAURANTS CONTINUE TO REOPEN AND MULTIPLY. CHEZ TEMPOREL IS OPEN AGAIN. ST. GEORGES HOTEL IS STILL A RUIN, BUT ST. GEORGES BEACH NEXT DOOR IS OPEN AND THRIVING, AND LE TOUT BEIRUT IS THERE SUNNING ITSELF EVERYDAY. CROWDS ARE SUCH THAT ONE CANNOT FIND A PLACE TO PARK ONE'S CAR. THE LATEST RESTAURANT IS THE BRILLAT (FROM BRILLAT SAVARIN), PERCHED ATOP A HIGH-RISE APARTMENT BUILDING ACROSS FROM LINDA SURSOCK'S PAD IN ASHRAFIYAH. IT IS EMPLOYING THE FORMER COOKS OF THE ST. GEORGES AND LUCULLUS AND EVERYONE REPORTS THE FOOD IS EXCELLENT.

6. NIGHTTIME SOCIAL LIFE IS ALSO RESUMING. MINISTER OF INDUSTRY MICHEL DOUMIT GAVE A LARGE DINNER PARTY IN TRADITIONAL LEBANESE STYLE LAST SATURDAY, AND FORMER DIRECTOR OF SECURITY FARID CHEHAB

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IS DONG SAME THIS SATURDAY. PEOPLE ARE STILL A LITTLE WARY ABOUT GOING OUT AT NIGHT, BUT ANYONE WHO IS INTERESTED CAN HAVE VERY BUSY SOCIAL LIFE HERE.

7. AUB HOSPITAL IS OPERATING WITH FULL SERVICES AND REMAINS OASIS OF EFFICIENCY AND CLEANLINESS. AUB PLAYERS HAVE RECENTLY PUT ON SERIES OF ONE-ACT PLAYS AND A COMIC OPERETTA BY HISTORIAN KAMAL SALIBI CALLED "THE MARCHIONESS OF SADEN-SADEN." IT IS A SATIRE ON MARRIAGE, AS BEFITS A MISOGYNIST LIKE SALIBI. ALL OF THESE PERFORMANCES HAVE BEEN SOLD OUT, SUCH IS THE LOCAL HUNGER FOR ENTERTAINMENT.

8. HAMRA STREET IN RAS BEIRUT IS SO CROWDED WITH VEHICLES AND PEOPLE THAT PASSAGE IS DIFFICULT. CAFES ARE FULL AND THEATERS ARE SHOWING FIRST-RUN MOVIES, OR ALMOST FIRST-RUN.

9. THE CASINO DU LIBAN HAS REOPENED, AT LEAST AS FAR AS GAMBLING AND DINNER ARE CONCERNED, ALTHOUGH IT HAS HAD ONLY ONE TOPLESS SPECTACLE SO FAR THIS YEAR.

10. BIG NEWS ON THE FRONT PAGE OF L'ORIENT JUNE 16 WAS THE RETURN OF CHARLES AZNAVOUR, WHO WAS GIVEN THE ORDER OF THE PRINCE OF CILICIA BY ARMENIAN CATHOLICS. THE PAPER COMMENTED THAT RETURN OF AZNAVOUR MEANT THAT THINGS WERE BACK TO NORMAL. SAME ISSUE ANNOUNCED REOPENING OF RACE TRACK THIS WEEKEND. MOB SCENE EXPECTED THERE.

11. ANOTHER SIGN OF NORMALCY IS THE FLIGHT ACTIVITY AT THE AIRPORT, ALTHOUGH THERE IS SOME CONFUSION AS TO THE VOLUME OF TRAFFIC IN AND OUT, MOST OF THE MAJOR AIRLINES HAVE RESUMED SERVICE HERE, AND LEBANESE CLAIM THAT PAN AMERICAN IS ONLY HOLDOUT.

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12. THOSE WHO HAVE LIVED IN LEBANON WILL RECOGNIZE FROM ABOVE ALL THE TRADITIONAL SIGNS OF LEBANESE VITALITY, WHICH TENDS TO CONCENTRATE ON CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION WHENEVER IT GETS THE CHANCE. YET THERE ARE MANY GAPING HOLES IN THE FABRIC. THE LEBANESE GRASSHOPPERS ARE FIDDLING AWAY THE SUMMER WHILE THEIR PATRIMONY RUNS OUT AS RESULT OF INACTION. I HAD A VERY DISPIRITING CONVERSATION ON THIS SUBJECT WITH PRIME MINISTER HOSS JUNE 16. I SAID THE RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL WAS MOVING TOO SLOWLY. HE REPLIED THAT EVERYTHING WAS MOVING TOO SLOWLY

AND GOVERNMENT ITSELF WAS VERY DISSATISFIED WITH LACK OF PROGRESS, BUT THERE WAS NOTHING IT COULD DO UNTIL SOME PROGRESS WAS MADE ON POLITICAL RECONCILIATION. AT EVERY LEVEL FROM THE MOST IMPORTANT TO THE MOST MINOR PROBLEMS THEY WERE BLOCKED BY POLITICAL OBJECTIONS.

13. HOSS SAID THEIR SITUATION WAS COMPLICATED BY THE SOUTH. THE FLOW OF REFUGEES FROM THAT AREA HAD ALREADY CREATED SOCIAL  
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PROBLEMS AND THREATENED TO CREATE MORE. FOR ALL THE LEBANESE KNEW, THE SOUTH WOULD EXPLODE AT ANY MOMENT AND MAKE THINGS EVEN WORSE. HOW COULD THEY PLAN FOR FUTURE IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES? OF COURSE GOL WAS DRAGGING ITS FEET, EVERYBODY KNEW THAT. BUT THEY HAD TO MAKE SOME POLITICAL PROGRESS BEFORE THEY COULD GO ANYWHERE.

14. I ASKED WHETHER THE CONSTITUTIONAL DOCUMENT OF 1976 BEING PUSHED BY THE SYRIANS WAS THE BASIS FOR CONCILIATION. HE SAID IT WAS A POINT OF DEPARTURE BUT WOULD HAVE TO BE MODIFIED. I NOTED THAT WALID JUMBLATT HAD TOLD ME EARLIER SAME DAY THAT PSP COULD NOT ACCEPT IT BECAUSE IT INSTITUTIONALIZED CONFESSIONALISM. HOSS REPLIED THAT THERE WAS NO ESCAPE FROM CONFESSIONALISM FOR TIME BEING. NO ONE WAS MORE OPPOSED TO IT THAN HE WAS BUT HE SAW NO ALTERNATIVE TO IT FOR THE MOMENT.

15. OTHER SIGNS OF LACK OF PROGRESS ABOUND. MOST STRIKING IS THE NON-RETURN OF FOREIGN BUSINESSMEN AND SUMMER VISITORS. THERE ARE ALMOST NO TOURISTS TO SPEAK OF, OTHER THAN AN INTREPID BAND OF STUDENTS FROM FRANCE'S ECOLE NATIONALE D'ADMINISTRATION. TOO MANY PEOPLE ARE UNCERTAIN ABOUT LEBANON. MANY MEMBERS OF THE LEBANESE ELITE SHARE THAT UNCERTAINTY AND ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ITS PROPAGATION. MANY ARE CONSIDERING MOVING PERMANENTLY TO PARIS OR ELSEWHERE. WITH REGARD TO BUSINESSMEN, AT THIS POINT WE CAN COUNT TWO AMERICANS RESIDENT HERE ASIDE FROM BANK MANAGERS. OTHERS HAVE NOT RETURNED NOT JUST BECAUSE THEY ARE UNCERTAIN ABOUT THE FUTURE BUT ALSO BECAUSE THE COMMUNICATIONS WHICH ONCE MADE THIS PLACE SO CONVENIENT ARE NOT YET FUNCTIONING AS THEY DID.

16. ANOTHER SIGN IS LACK OF PROGRESS ON RECONSTRUCTION. VERY LITTLE IS GOING ON IN THAT RESPECT. THERE IS LIMITED PRIVATE INITIATIVE IN SOME FIELDS SUCH AS ENTERTAINMENT, BUT FIRST SPADE HAS YET TO BE TURNED IN RECONSTRUCTION OF BEIRUT. (NEVERTHELESS, CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY CONTINUES APACE IN THE TOWNS OF THE MARONITE HEARTLAND, AS IT DID EVEN DURING MUCH OF THE WAR.) THIS  
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REFLECTS NOT ONLY INACTION OF THE GOVERNMENT BUT LACK OF CONFIDENCE OF PRIVATE SECTOR AND A LEBANESE PREFERENCE FOR LA DOLCE VITA AT THE ST. GEORGES OVER NATIONAL MOBILIZATION TO CLEAN UP THE MESS.

17. QUESTION IS HOW LONG LEBANON CAN ENDURE UNLESS IT PULLS ITSELF TOGETHER. ONE ASKS WHAT PEOPLE ARE LIVING ON TODAY, GIVEN LACK OF TRADITIONAL REVENUES FROM TOURISM, SUMMER VISITORS AND SERVICES. WE WONDER HOW LONG THEY CAN CONTINUE SPENDING WITHOUT EARNING.

18. THE LEBANESE TODAY ARE DISORGANIZED AND SO FAR UNABLE TO COPE WITH THEIR POLITICAL PROBLEM. THEY LACK DYNAMIC LEADERSHIP, WHICH THEY ARE UNLIKELY TO GET OUT OF PRESENT GOVERNMENT. IN ITS ABSENCE, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT WITH TIME AND LUCK AND SUFFICIENT HELP FROM OUTSIDE GOL WILL MUDDLE THROUGH, BUT CONTINUED LACK OF PROGRESS IS DISCOURAGING.

19. IT IS PROBABLY USELESS FOR US TO TRY TO FORCE THE PACE, WHICH IS SET BY LEBANESE INSTITUTIONS AND PERSONALITIES. WE CAN, HOWEVER, SEEK TO ENCOURAGE SARKIS AND HIS GOVERNMENT TO DEAL WITH THEIR PROBLEMS IN A MORE RESOLUTE FASHION. TO THIS END, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE IN ORDER TO CREATE CONFIDENCE, TO LOOK FOR WAYS TO ENCOURAGE LEBANESE LEADERSHIP WITH EVIDENCE OF OUR SUPPORT, AND TO SOLICIT THE SUPPORT OF OTHERS, NOTABLY THE SAUDIS, KUWAITIS AND ISRAELIS. THIS IS GOING TO BE A COMPLEX TASK.  
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## Message Attributes

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